



Open Letter to Governor Jerry Brown from UC, CSU and CCC Student Leaders Regarding Last Week's Student Mobilization in Sacramento and the "Compromise" Tax Initiative Proposal

March 15, 2012

Dear Governor Brown,

We are writing you with deep concern about the state's continuing disinvestment from public higher education, and your lack of direct communication with students.

When you were elected in 2010, many students hoped that your election would usher in a new era for public higher education in California and reverse the approach taken by your predecessor. Thus far, things have not improved, and in fact, in many ways they have worsened. Last year, you cut over \$1.5 billion from state higher education funding. This year, you have proposed more "trigger cuts" and devastating cuts to the Cal Grant program. Because of the repeated cuts in past years, fees at the UC, CSU and Community Colleges have roughly doubled over the past five years. During that time, courses, departments, and services have all been slashed to the point of being unrecognizable.

On March 5th, thousands of UC, CSU, and CCC students came to visit you at the Capitol. We arrived in Sacramento from all corners of the state with a simple yet urgent request: End the cuts to higher education, and fund our future. Despite such unprecedented numbers in Sacramento on March 5th and numerous demonstrations on campuses throughout the state in recent months, you have not made yourself available to meet directly with students.

Students from the three segments have not been involved in any negotiations that your office is having with representatives from our administrations. We find it problematic that these critical discussions, which may result in a "compact" that includes repeated fee increases in future years, are taking place without input from the very students these decisions are going to affect. While Governor Schwarzenegger met directly with students to hear our concerns, we are unaware of any face-to-face meetings that you have held with student leadership since your election. We find this unacceptable, especially when such drastic cuts to our education continue unabated.

Students support your call for new taxes to fund education and essential services. Still, we have received no outreach or consultation regarding your tax proposal including its recent revision. The previous version of your tax initiative would not have restored any of the \$1.5 billion you cut from higher education last year, and its failure would result in an additional \$200 million cut to UC and CSU. For the community colleges, the initiative's passage would see a buyback of deferrals from previous years, and its failure would scrap the deferral buyback and lead to an additional cut of nearly \$300 million. This is not the sort of visionary thinking that students are looking to you for in order to restore the greatness of our system of higher education in California.

Students are aware that there is a potential compromise to merge your tax proposal and the Millionaire's Tax to have a single initiative on the ballot in November. Once again, we are concerned that our future is being negotiated without students at the table. Students would expect to be consulted moving forward, and that this compromise will eliminate any "trigger cuts" for our systems, make more significant increases to higher education funding and reverse tuition hikes if the tax measure passes.

There are over 3 million UC, CSU and Community College students in California. We are one of the largest and most diverse constituency groups in the state. We vote and we are will continue to take direct action in defense of higher education. We are ready to work with you to find solutions to the crisis facing higher education. We look forward to your reply.

In Solidarity,

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